

The University of Chicago

THE FERTILITY CULT IN HOSEA

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE
AND INTERPRETATION

By
HERBERT GORDON MAY

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THE FERTILITY CULT IN HOSEA

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Much light has been thrown upon the life of the Hebrews by a comparative study of the religions of the Near East. It has made possible the observation of the religion of Israel against the background of the great masses of men and women in whose lives the cult functioned and out of whose experiences it grew, correcting our limited vision of the cult as a factor in a desert panorama. The result of this insight is that the religion of the Hebrews is not viewed as Old Testament theology, as *concepts* of deity in minds which happened to be burdened with superstitions concerning sacred trees and springs, but rather as part and parcel of the *life* of the everyday Israelite. The knowledge of the general pattern of near-eastern religion has placed in perspective the religion of the Hebrews.

The essence of this pattern is found in the fertility cult, which centered in the worship of the vegetation deity who died in the autumn and was resurrected in the spring. The religious services took the form of a dramatization of the death of the god, his resurrection, and his marriage to the mother-goddess. The popularity of this cult among the Hebrews has been abundantly evidenced by Old Testament scholars.¹ It was the predominant cult among the Egyptians, Syrians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and many other peoples of the Near East.

¹ T. J. Meek, "Canticles and the Tammuz Cult," *AJSL*, XXXIX, 1 ff.; W. H. Schoff (ed.), *The Song of Songs: A Symposium*, art. by Meek, "The Song of Songs and the Fertility Cult," pp. 49 ff.; W. C. Graham, "Notes on the Interpretation of Isaiah 5:1-14," *AJSL*, XLV, 167 ff.; W. W. Baudissin, *Adonis und Eshmun*, pp. 385 ff.; cf. W. F. Albright, "Historical and Mythical Elements in the Story of Joseph," *JBL*, XXXVII, 111 ff.; L. Waterman, "The Marriage of Hosea," *ibid.*, pp. 193 ff.

Its representation in the Book of Hosea is especially illuminating. The death of the god, the mourning rites and search for the departed deity, the resurrection, the marriage of the god and goddess, the designation and function of the male and female sacred prostitutes, the picturesqueness of the shrine and its relation to the everyday life of the people, the rôle of the divine offspring, human sacrifices, and many other phases of the cult mythology and ritual are revealed in the writings of Hosea. The corruptions of the text of Hosea, which permit a thousand and one plausible reconstructions, present great dangers of misinterpretation to fit the a priori conceptions of the interpreter, especially when he has such a tempting thesis as this to present. It must be remembered, however, that Hosea is concerned throughout with the popular cult, which was the fertility cult, and more references to it of an exact nature must be expected from Hosea than from other prophets whose interests were more political and social. Hosea belongs to the fertility-cult milieu more definitely than any other prophet. His concepts and symbols are more frequently those of that cult.

THE DEATH OF THE GOD

A recognition of the fact that Hosea frequently employs the symbolism of the death and resurrection of the vegetation deity clarifies many dubious passages in Hosea. As an introduction to his use of the cult symbolism a passage containing the imagery of the death and resurrection of the god, and indicating the resulting fertility, is quoted:

When Ephraim saw his lacerations and Israel¹ his wounds, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to the great king.² But he is not able to heal you, nor can he cure you of your wound, for I am like a lion unto Ephraim and like a young lion toward the house of Israel. I myself tear and go away. I carry off while none rescues. I will go away and return to my place, until they realize their guilt, and seek my face, [and] in their distress they seek me, [saying:]³ "Come, let us return to Yahweh, for he has torn and he will heal us. He has smitten and he will bandage us. He will make us live again after two days: on the third day he will resurrect us that we may live before him. . . . His going forth is established like the dawn, and he shall come to us like the showers, like the spring rain that waters the land."⁴

¹ The context and parallelism demand this reading. So most commentators.

² Cf. Syr. ܡܠܟܐ ܥܠܝܐ. The reading is dubious.

³ Note Syriac insertion ܡܠܟܐ ܥܠܝܐ.

⁴ Hos. 5:13—6:3.

The chapter division is deceptive, for these verses are a unit,¹ representing an adaptation of the cult mythology. As the death of the vegetation deity from the attack of a wild animal is to be the destruction of the people at the hands of Yahweh. As the god's expectation of resurrection with the coming of the fertilizing spring rains is to be the hope of the people that their desolation will be transmuted into prosperity.² Their optimism, however, will be fruitless, for what has Yahweh to do with fickle Israel?³

Yahweh is represented as rending Ephraim as the wild boar tore Adonis.⁴ In the Palestinian environment the substitution of the lion for the boar is natural.⁵ The manner of the death of the god was conceived with almost infinite variation.⁶ The emphasis on the wounds of Ephraim is significant.⁷ Perhaps the self-inflicted wounds of the cult ritual symbolized the wounds of the slain god.⁸ Ephraim goes to Assyria for healing; for the same reason the wounded god descended to the land of no return, there to sit beneath the tree of healing and be cured by Ea, Ishtar, or demons.⁹ The expected healing, which in the

¹ Marti, Volz, Cheyne, and others deny the genuineness of 5:15b—6:3 on the grounds that it is a late reference to the Exile. Such an excision is unnecessary with the foregoing interpretation. Baudissin (*op. cit.*, p. 402) considers 5:13—6:3 a unit and an adaptation of cult symbolism.

² Harper interprets this as an "assumed" repentance, but it is a satire on the normal cult reaction (W. R. Harper, "Amos and Hosea," *ICC*, p. 283).

³ Hos. 6:4 טָרַח is used of the dying god in Gen. 27:33 (H. G. May, "The Evolution of the Joseph Story," *AJSL*, XLVII, 87).

⁴ Hos. 5:14; cf. H. Strong, *The Syrian Goddess*, pp. 45, 46; J. G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, pp. 8, 23—26.

⁵ The Boghaz Keui reliefs evidence the association of the lion with the fertility cult (see J. Garstang, *The Land of the Hittites*, p. 228, Pl. LXV; Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 100 ff.). The lion symbolism associated with David is an indication that the Dod or Ariel cultus centered in his person (A. H. Godbey, "Ariel or the David Cultus," *AJSL*, XLI, 253 ff.).

⁶ The fertility deity was variously conceived as meeting his death at the hands of the reapers, by self-castration, by burning, by drowning, by accident at the hands of another god, or by the attack of wild animals (Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 48, 220, 262, 296; S. Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 11—15; *Epic of Creation*, p. 39; Rawlinson, *History of Phoenicia*, p. 335; J. P. Peters, "The Worship of Tammuz," *JBLit.*, XXXVI, 106).

⁷ חִלְרִי is apparently synonymous with מִדְרִי, signifying lacerations received from weapons or animals, and not mere sickness as in other occurrences (see also Isa. 1:5; 53:4, 5; Jer. 6:7; 10:19). A New Year liturgy reads in part:

"The . . . which touch him beneath and with which they clothe him: these are the wounds with which they wound him; with his blood (they are dyed)" (Langdon, *Epic of Creation*, p. 37; see Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 184, 185, 221, 222).

⁸ Such may be the significance of the wounds referred to in Hos. 7:14; Zech. 13:5. Such was the significance of self-castration (cf. Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 221 ff.).

⁹ See Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 30—32; F. A. Vanderburgh, "Babylonian Tammuz Lamentations," *AJSL*, XXVII, 316—21; Albright, *op. cit.*, pp. 125, 126. Tammuz was the "healer" par excellence (see Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 32—38). Eshmun, the Syrian counterpart of Tammuz, played a similar rôle, being identified by

cult was taken as a matter of course, will in this instance not occur. That the fertility-cult symbolism is used here by Hosea is further evidenced by the mention of a resurrection.¹ This will be discussed later.

In 13:1 ff. Hosea again uses the symbolism of the dying and resurrected deity. Ephraim is dead.² Yahweh, as a wild beast, has waylaid him,³ and, having died, he is in Sheol.⁴ After the analogy of the dying god he would expect to be resurrected. But it is not to be. Yahweh asks:⁵ "Shall I rescue them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? Where are your plagues, O death? Where is your destruction, O Sheol? Compassion is hid from my eyes."⁶ In other words, Yahweh demands to know what has happened to the effectiveness of death and Sheol. Have they lost their power? No! This time the grave will not give up its dead; the resurrection will not be consummated, for Yahweh will have no compassion, and the result will be as though the fertility-god did not rise. An east wind from the desert will dry up the fountains and springs.⁷

the Greeks with Asclepius (*Corpus inscriptionum Semiticarum*, No. 143; see also Gesenius, *Inscripturae linguaeque Phoeniciae*, No. 4). For the identification of Adonis and Eshmun see Barton, "The Genesis of the God Eshmun," *JAOS*, XXI, 188 ff. Baudissin (*op. cit.*, pp. 310 ff.) has established the usage of the root רפא in connection with the dying gods of Agade, Assyria, Babylonia, Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Palmyra.

¹ Hos. 5:13—6:3 is strangely parallel to the poem of the suffering servant (Isa. 53:1 ff.). The wounds and lacerations of the servant, his death, and his resurrection are drawn from the cult symbolism. Significant also is the healing efficacy of his sufferings (vs. 5). For a discussion of possible fertility-cult origin of this symbolism see H. Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie*, pp. 330—33; Baudissin, *op. cit.*, pp. 423, 424.

² Hos. 13:1.

³ Hos. 13:7.

⁴ In Cant. 8:6 מות and שאול are represented as overcome by the power of love. Isaiah refers to Sheol in his parody on the Dod vineyard song (see Graham, *op. cit.*, pp. 177, 178).

⁵ There is no versional support for reading this as a question, but the context demands it. So most commentators.

⁶ Hos. 13:14.

⁷ Hos. 13:15. The dubious stichos כִּי הוּא בֶן אֲחֵים וּפְרִיָא is to be omitted as a scribal note on the division of the United Kingdom, if the versional emendation of פְּרִיָא for יִשְׂרָאֵל is to be accepted. Conceivably, however, this is a concessive clause, describing the fruitfulness of Ephraim as compared with the other tribes, in spite of which an east wind is coming to destroy him. The symbolism may be drawn from the fertilizing powers of the god, who was conceived as one among brothers (see May, *op. cit.*, p. 89). In the cult, as here (13:13; cf. 11:1), the dying god was represented as a son as well as a husband or brother. The name "Tammuz" (Sumerian *Damu*) signifies "son" (Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 6, 7; cf. Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 42). In the Babylonian "Song of Songs" we read: "Oh, come down to the garden of the king, which reeks with cedar. Thou, O son, art a lover of my bosom. On the other side of the river is the city of lamentation. . . . Oh, I long for the couch of the sons" (trans. Meek in art. in Schoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 77). The youth of Canticles was represented as a son (Cant. 8:1, 2, 5). Joseph was the beloved son (Gen. 37:3).

It is evident from Ezekiel's description of the female *yoshevoth* weeping for Tammuz that the Hebrews were acquainted with the belief that the dying god went to Sheol.¹ The city through which the maiden of Canticles wandered was doubtless the city of the dead.² More often among the Hebrews, as also sometimes among the Babylonians and Assyrians, the god was represented as being at a distance or asleep.³ In Hosea the reference is more frequently to the departed deity, whose absence causes a general failure of the forces of fertility in men, animals, and vegetation.

The most striking example of this is to be translated:

With their flocks and their herds they shall come to seek Yahweh, but they shall not find [him]. He has withdrawn from them. They have been faithless to Yahweh in that they have borne illegitimate children. Now the new moon will devour them with their fields.⁴

The deity has departed, and their ritual searchings will be in vain. Since the deity is not present, they and their fields will be devoured.

The forced departure of the god through capture by the enemy had the same effect on vegetation.⁵ When the calf⁶ of Bethel has been carried away to Assyria as tribute, priest and people shall bewail him, and the ritual rejoicings shall cease.⁷ The fertile vineyards about the sanctuary shall be replaced by thorns and thistles.⁸

Likewise, when Yahweh journeys away from Ephraim, the result is the coming of sterility, so that there are no more births, motherhood, or conceptions, and the children which the people are rearing

¹ Ezek. 8:14.

² Cant. 3:2; 5:7, etc. Cf. the "city of lamentation" in the translation by Meek, in Schoff, *loc. cit.*

³ This same reticence in the matter of mentioning the word "death" appears in the Babylonian rituals in which it is deliberately shunned or discreetly paraphrased. See F. Böhl, "Das Menschenopfer bei den alten Sumerern," *ZA*, XXXIX, 95 and we read: "'Tammuz, the lord, slumbers,' in woe they sigh much."

"The lord Idin-Dagan sleeps, and the gardens of themselves restrain [their growth]" (Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 20, 26). See also Cant. 1:7; 2:8; 6:1; 8:1. The same concept appears in the taunting of the prophets of Baal by Elijah on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18:27).

⁴ Hos. 5:6, 7.

⁵ Hos. 10:5 ff.

⁶ Hos. 10:5, reading עֵגֶל (sing.) with the Syriac and LXX.

⁷ The interpretation of 10:5c by the versions is conflicting. All of them, however, seem to have read יִגְדֹּל, and in view of Mic. 1:10 I read לֹא יִגְדֹּל. Most commentators change יִגְדֹּל to יִדְחֹל or יִרְחֹל. So Wellhausen, Nowack, Marti, Harper, Scott, Riessler, Peiser, and others.

⁸ For thorns and thistles as symbols of lack of fertility see Isa. 5:6; 32:13; Hos. 2:8; Cant. 2:2. See Isa. 7:21-25, which W. C. Graham maintains is a unity with what precedes and a sarcastic prediction that unfruitfulness will result from the fertility cult.

die.¹ A miscarrying womb and dry breasts are then their lot.² Similarly, when Yahweh "turns,"³ he takes away the corn, wine, wool, and flax, proving thereby that he, and not Baal, has control over the forces of fertility.⁴

The clearest example of the lack of fertility resulting from the absence of the fertility deity is to be found in the incident of the trial of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.⁵ The scene is laid in the midst of a devastating drought, and the obvious object of the prophets' prayers is rain and not fire. It seems probable that in the original incident the petitions were for rain,⁶ and it may have been a later editor who supplied the variation of the miracle of fire. The technique of the prophets of Baal was similar to that used in the mourning rites, and they were attempting to arouse a deity who was asleep, on a journey, or gone aside.⁷

THE MOURNING RITES

The departure of the deity and consequent death of the vegetation were accompanied by ritualistic wailing, the characteristics of which were similar to the wailing for a dead relative or friend.⁸ This may be

¹ Hos. 9:11, 12. Read בְּשֹׁרֵרִי with Vulgate, *recessero*. So Ewald and Hitzig. Cf. Seb. מַלְפֵּיפִי.

² Hos. 9:14.

³ Hos. 2:11, אָשׁוּב. Whence is the deity to return—to or from Canaan? Harper's suggestion, "take back again," is logically awkward, and Wellhausen's reading, "hold back," is without analogy. Scott (*The Message of Hosea*, p. 31) omits it. The versions are as noncommittal as the Hebrew, reading *converter*, [הִסְבֵּךְ], ἐπιστρέψω. The text is perhaps to be interpreted in the light of Hos. 5:15, אֵלֶךְ אֲשׁוּבָה אֶל-מְקוֹמִי, referring to the return of Yahweh to his "place," i.e., his home, conceived of as being at a distance (see Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 282). As a result of this departure of Yahweh, the grains and wines are removed.

⁴ Hos. 2:11.

⁵ I Kings 18:27.

⁶ In its present form the story belongs to the cycle of traditions of fantastic miracles clustering about the person of Elijah. It represents an adaptation by the Deuteronomist, protesting against the rites of the local cults. The phrase כְּמִשְׁפָּטִים (vs. 28) is retrospective, pointing to a later-developed tradition. Vss. 42 ff. give a hint of the real object of the prophets' prayers. The episode of the 450 prophets who sat at Jezebel's table and their total destruction has an air of unreality.

⁷ Many parallels to this might be quoted. A Tammuz ritual contains the following verses:

"For the far removed there is wailing,
Ah me, my child, the far removed,
My Damu, the far removed. . . ."

The wailing is for the plants; the first lament is "They grow not," etc. (Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, p. 10; cf. p. 26).

Another lament reads:

"O Arulu, the seized away, return,
O Arulu, to the stalks and sheepfolds return."

—LANGDON, *Sumerian Liturgical Texts*, p. 117.

⁸ Cf. I Kings 18:28 with Jer. 16:6 and Deut. 14:1. This characteristic of the cult-wailing rites is further indicated by the fact that human sacrifices, doubtless symbolizing the death of the god, were consummated at the shrine festivities.

taken as evidence that the popular cult of the Hebrews was concerned with the dying god. A passage from Joel indicates the symbolism under which the ritual was consummated:

Wail, like a virgin girded with sackcloth,
For the bridegroom of her youth.¹

A drought which destroyed the crops, or a locust plague, as well as the annual death of the vegetation at the time of harvest, were considered the result of the departure of the god. Which occasion called forth the ritual wailing is not always evident from the text. The prevalence of these rites is indicated by the profuse vocabulary expressing the ritual mourning.²

The most revealing reference to this aspect of the cult ritual as found in Hosea is to be translated as follows:

And they do not cry unto me in their hearts when they wail upon their couches.³ For corn and wine they lacerate themselves;⁴ they revolt against me.⁵ Although I was the one who strengthened their arms,⁶ yet they conspired evil against me. They turned to Baal, etc.⁷

The couches in the shrines are well known to us from Hebrew, Babylonian, and Sumerian sources.⁸ That the couch was prominent

¹ Joel 1:8. Cf. the following Tammuz lamentation: "His bride to her dwelling he caused to return, the shining one, the mistress of heaven, to the land's house of rest. Thither she entered: wailing (?) she sat up. The goddess, the mistress of heaven, like one in the darkness she sitteth in the place of humiliation" (Vanderburgh, *op. cit.*, p. 314). This text may shed light on the nature of the Heb. *yosheveth* (see W. O. Graham, "Some Suggestions toward the Interpretation of Micah 1:10-16," *AJSL*, XLVII, 238 ff.).

² ספד, גור, זעק, הייל, אבל, אמל.

³ Harper (*op. cit.*, p. 305) and Gardner (*AJSL*, XVIII, 108), unaware of the cult background, would read *מזבוח* for *משכבותם*. Riessler (*Die kleinen Propheten*, p. 36) correctly associates this passage with the fertility cult, comparing it with Lev. 19:28 and I Kings 18:26 ff. This couch is to be compared with the couch of the maiden of Canticles, where it was probably located in the *בית אמי* or *בית היין* (Cant. 3:1; cf. 2:4; 3:4; 8:2). Ehrlich significantly associates it with the *משכב דדים* of Ezek. 23:17.

The sentence division after *משכבותם* is uncertain. I have read with the versions, but the parallel idiom of Joel 1:11 may indicate that we should read: "... When they wail upon their couches for corn and wine. They cut themselves" (see J. M. P. Smith, *The Old Testament: An American Translation*).

⁴ Read *יתגודדי* with the LXX Wellhausen, Nowack, Marti, J. M. P. Smith, Harper, Riessler, Peiser, and others. It is possible that a form of *גור* is to be read, which, in view of Hos. 10:5, might signify ritual wailing.

⁵ This stichos is suspiciously corrupt. The balance is awkward and there is no parallelism.

⁶ Omit *יפרתיו* with the LXX. So Harper, Riessler, Marti, and others.

⁷ Hos. 7:14-16. Read *לא על אל בעל* for *לא על אל*. So Harper, J. M. P. Smith, Nowack, and others.

⁸ Isa. 57:7, 8; Ezek. 23:17 and Cant. 3:1 associate the *משכב* with the Israelite fertility cult and the motif of the marriage of the god and goddess. The chamber of the goddess at the Sumerian shrines contained such a couch (see Woolley, *The Sumerians*, pp. 146,

also in the Hebrew shrines is evidence of the close similarity between the Hebrew and non-Hebrew cults of the Near East. These couches were primarily associated with the ritual of the marriage of the god and goddess.¹ Their appearance in Hosea in connection with the wailing rites recalls Joel's admonition to wail as a virgin for the bridegroom of her youth.²

That Hosea is picturing a scene at the shrine wherein the wailing is for the dead or departed deity is evidenced by his use of the word יתגודר.³ It is probable that the Deuteronomic objection to ritual laceration for the dead was because of its association with the fertility cult of the local shrines.⁴ There is an abundance of evidence of the practice of ritual self-laceration among the Hebrews in connection with the fertility cult. Jeremiah chided the Jerusalemites because they cut themselves in the shrine of the *zonah*,⁵ and it may have been in the shrine of the *zonah* that the couches of Hos. 7:14 were located. Rahab, a *zonah*, lived in such a shrine.⁶ So common a practice was this ritual laceration that the prophet of the cult shrine could be identified by the wounds⁷ he had received in the בית מאהב, which is perhaps to be identified with the shrine of the *zonah*.⁸ The prophets lacerated

152). Gudea presents a picturesque description of the Sumerian chamber of the goddess and the couch ritual (see G. Barton, *Royal Inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad*, pp. 239-45; also Sayce, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia*, p. 455; trans. by Meek in art. in Schoff, *loc. cit.*). Graham (*AJSL*, XLVII, 241) has some pertinent remarks on the root שכב (cf. Baudissin's remarks on this root, *op. cit.*, p. 405).

¹ Note the significance of משכב דדים (Ezek. 23:17). See Graham's analysis of דרך in *op. cit.*, XLV, 167-69.

² Joel 1:8.

³ Jos. 7:14. F. E. Peiser's reconstruction of this verse as a reference to the wailing rites for the gods Ammiu and Dagan, while somewhat drastic, recognizes the essential cult significance of the passage יתגודר על דגן בלבם יתגודר (Philologische Studien zum Alten Testament, pp. 28, 29).

⁴ Deut. 14:1, 2. The prohibition was purposed to distinguish the Yahwist from the non-Yahwist. Shaving off the hair as a sign of mourning, referred to in this law and in the parallel legislation of Lev. 19:27, is to be noted. Lucian informs us that shaving the head was an Adonis mourning rite:

"They proceed to shave their heads, too, like the Egyptians on the loss of their Apis. The women who refuse to be shaved have to submit to the following penalty, viz., to stand for the space of an entire day in readiness to expose their persons for hire" (Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 46).

The context of the Leviticus legislation suggests cult practices.

⁵ Jer. 5:7, בית זונה.

⁶ Jos. 2:1, בית אשה זונה.

⁷ מכות; cf. יד ויחבשנו (Hos. 6:1).

⁸ Zech. 14:6. These shrines recall the once-roofed-in chambers of the high places at Petra (see G. L. Robinson, *The Sarcophagus of an Ancient Civilization*, pp. 158-71). Cf. also בית היין of Cant. 2:4; 3:4; 8:2, and the במות טלאות of Ezek. 16:16 ff.

themselves on Mount Carmel as a part of their ritual of mourning for the departed deity.¹

We may assume that the mourning for the calf-god of Beth-Aven, as he departed from Canaan and was bewailed by people and priests, was accompanied by rites such as these.² One of the wailing cries seems to have been, "My God, we, Israel, know thee!"³ It is to be compared with the lamentation, "Alas the day! Destruction from the Almighty has come!"⁴

The death of the vegetation was interpreted as the mourning and languishing of nature. The land itself mourns as everything that dwells therein languishes.⁵ Isaiah refers to the mourning of the new wine and the languishing of the vine.⁶ The parallelism of a passage from Joel is striking:

The priests mourn, the ministers of Yahweh;
The field is devastated, the ground mourns, etc.⁷

This conception of the mourning of the land has its parallel in other Semitic cults. A cow wails to Ishtar and the sea is terrified.⁸ The gardens of themselves restrain their growth when Idin-Dagan sleeps.⁹ The very river ran red from Aphaca to the sea at the death of Adonis, and the red anemone dyed the face of nature with his blood.¹⁰

THE SEARCH FOR THE GOD

The search of the goddess for her dead consort formed one of the most prominent and widespread motifs of the cult mythology. It appeared in various forms. Ishtar searched the land of no return for her consort, Tammuz. Demeter, the mother, sought everywhere for Eurydice. Isis crossed the waters from Egypt to Gebel in order to find Osiris. Aphrodite hastened to her wounded lover, tearing her divine flesh on the thorns of the white rose which she dyed with her sacred blood. The maiden of Canticles sought her lover in the city. It is

¹ I Kings 18:28. Here, as in Zech. 14:6, it is the prophets who lacerate themselves, recalling the actions of the modern dervish. This is consistent with Hosea's description of the prophets as maddened "men of spirit" (Hos. 9:7; cf. Jer. 29:26).

² Hos. 10:5.

³ Hos. 4:3.

⁴ Hos. 8:2.

⁵ Isa. 24:7.

⁶ Joel 1:15; cf. Hos. 13:2.

⁷ Joel 1:9b-10a.

⁸ Langdon, "Calendars of Liturgies and Prayers," *AJSL*, XLII, 122; cf. Jonah 3:7.

⁹ Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, p. 26.

¹⁰ Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 184, 262-65.

highly probable that many of the Old Testament references to seeking and finding Yahweh had their origin in this fertility-cult conception.¹

The search of the maiden of Canticles for her lover is paralleled in the metaphor of the *zonah* and her lovers in the second chapter of Hosea.² The woman shall pursue after her lovers, who, as will be later shown, are the male prostitutes and personify the vegetation deity. Although she seeks them, she will not overtake them, for Yahweh has beset her way with thorns and erected a wall against her.

The diction of this passage is strangely similar to that of the ritual of the search of the maiden for her lover. Compare *בקשתי את וירדפה את מאהבה ולא חשיג אחם ובקשתם ולא תמצא* *שאהבה נפשי בקשתיו ולא מצאתי* with *שאהבה נפשי בקשתיו ולא מצאתי*.³ The obstruction of the path of the searcher is an important detail of the concept of the searching goddess in the various manifestations of the cult. The watchmen of the city smote the maiden of Canticles, stripping her mantle from her when she sought her lover.⁴ Ishtar was impeded in her search by the watchmen of Hades, and her mantle was snatched from her.⁵ Beltis had to pass the watchmen at the gate of Bel's (Marduk's) sepulcher.⁶ The author of Hos. 2:8, 9 represents Yahweh as the one who obstructs the search of the *zonah* for her lovers, preventing her from finding her paths.⁷ The resemblance to the usual search motif becomes doubly certain when we learn that Yahweh is to strip the woman naked, even as in the Babylonian and Canticles versions the searcher was stripped by the watchmen.⁸ The reference to the wall of the *zonah* is made intelligible by a comparison with Isa. 5:5, and we may assume that it is the wall of the vineyard which is signified.⁹ There may be some significance in the thorns which are to hinder the search, for we

¹ Usually written *בפש* (or *שחר*, *רדח*, *דרש*, *רדח*) and *מצא*.

² Hos. 2:8, 9; cf. Cant. 3:1, 2; 5:7, 8; 6:11; 8:13.

³ Cant. 3:1.

⁴ Hos. 2:9.

⁵ Cant. 5:6, 7.

⁶ See J. A. Maynard, "Studies in Religious Texts from Ashur," *AJSL*, XXXIV, 25-28; D. Prince, "A Hymn to Tammuz," *ibid.*, XXVII, 85; Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, p. 10; Meek, art. in Schoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 61, 62.

⁷ Langdon, *Epic of Creation*, pp. 35, 37, ll. 11, 12.

⁸ Hos. 2:8. *נתיבותיה*. From the picture of the *zonah* in Proverbs we learn that the paths (*נתיבותיה*) of the sacred prostitute may include the city streets (Prov. 7:25; cf. 7:12). This interpretation of the imagery of Hos. 2:8, 9 is more natural than supposing it to refer to the life of a shepherd and his sheep according to Harper (*op. cit.*, p. 236) and Gardner ("Notes on Certain Passages in Hosea," *AJSL*, XVIII, 177).

⁹ Hos. 2:11, 12.

¹⁰ See Graham, *AJSL*, XLV, 167 ff. Many comparisons between Isa. 5:1-14 and Hos. 2:4 ff. are possible.

recall that Aphrodite's path to her lover was impeded by thorns.¹ More probably, however, they represent the lack of fertility, the thorns of the foreign growths in the devastated vineyard as in Isa. 5:5.

In a passage which exudes an agricultural aroma there is another reference to the search for the absent deity.² The search took place in the springtime. There is the sowing of the seed in high hopes for the harvest, the breaking-up of the fallow ground, and the coming of the spring rains.³ This is the proper time to seek Yahweh until he comes and rains righteousness.

In the previously discussed passage in which Ephraim is represented as the fertility-god who will not be resurrected on the third day Yahweh appears with the characteristics of the true departing deity.⁴ As a result of his return to his place, general desolation overtakes the land. It is he whom Ephraim will seek and whose coming forth is like the spring rains which water the land.⁵ Great sacrifices accompanied the search, for Hosea prophesies that, in spite of the flocks and herds brought by the people when they seek Yahweh, only desolation and destruction will eventuate.⁶

Hos. 11:7 has received as many and varied interpretations as any verse in the Old Testament. Another is possible from the fertility-cult viewpoint. It is to be read:

My people are dependent on my turning back:
To Baal they call, but he does not arise.⁷

¹ Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 185, 186.

² Hos. 10:12. The diction is significant: עַתָּה לְדֹרוֹשׁ אֶת יְהוָה.

³ The fertilizing spring rains were evidence that the search was successful and the deity was to return. Cf. I Kings 18:41, which is the true sequel to the rites on Mount Carmel. Note the coming of the fertility-god in the wake of the rains according to Cant. 2:8 ff. (see vs. 11). The following extract from a Sumerian ritual describing the marriage of the god and goddess at the New Year is significant: "He [Enlil] received her [Ninlil]; he cohabited with her; he caused it to rain" (J. P. Peters, "Notes and Suggestions on Early Sumerian Religion and Its Expression," *JOAS*, XLI, 143).

⁴ Hos. 5:15—6:3. There is a fine bit of sarcasm in the words of Ephraim. He, as the dying god, must look to Yahweh for his power of resurrection, seeking him who caused his death rather than be sought for by others. And Ephraim will recognize Yahweh as the true fertility-god who comes with the rains. This is to be compared with the sarcasm of Isaiah in Isa. 5:1 ff.

⁵ Hos. 6:3.

⁶ Hos. 5:6.

⁷ For variant interpretations see Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 386; Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 145; A. E. Speiser, "Note on Hosea 11:7," *JBL*, LXIV, 189-91. Note the reading of the Vulgate, *pendebit ad reditum meum*. LXX and Syriac read אֵל for עַל. Read וְאֵל יִקְרָא וְאֵל יִרְוֹם. Marti and Sellin read וְאֵל הַבַּעַל. In the final clause read יִרְוֹם (Polak), with the Vulgate and Syriac. My reconstruction is close to the Syriac, which reads in part, וְאֵל יִקְרָא וְהוּא.

Yahweh, and not Baal, is the real cause of the condition of the people. The latter is not a real god; it is Yahweh who turns back and to whom call must be made. מְשׁוּבְרִי may refer either to the departure or to the return of the deity.¹ The Masoretic reading of the word "yoke" is due to the influence of 4b, where לֵל is a scribal error.

THE RESURRECTION

Both the death and the resurrection of the god were celebrated at the New Year festival. To symbolize the winter season which passed between the time of the death and the resurrection of the god, it was necessary to provide an interim between the rites dramatizing these events. According to a text from Ashur, eleven days were required to consummate the action of the drama.² At Aphaca, Adonis was mourned one day and his resurrection was dramatized the following day.³ In the spring festival of Cybele and Attis at Rome the resurrection occurred on the fourth day.⁴ According to Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* the death of Osiris fell on the seventeenth of Athyr, and he was "found" on the nineteenth of Athyr.⁵ The late Hebrew conception is represented in the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus, according to which the deity was resurrected on the third day, after two days in the grave.⁶

There is apparently a reference to this interim between the death and resurrection of the god in Hosea, and it corresponds with the last two above-mentioned conceptions.⁷ Harper long ago recognized the reference to the resurrection in Hos. 6:2, suggesting that it may have inspired Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones.⁸ The symbolism of Ephraim in this passage as the dying god has already been noted. His expectation of resurrection in verse 2 is also drawn from the cult imagery. חַיִּה is frequently employed to signify the restoration of life

¹ Note the use of the form מְשׁוּבְרִי to indicate the return of the springtime of the year (II Sam. 11:1; I Kings 21:22, 26; II Chron. 36:10, etc.).

² Langdon, *Epic of Creation*, pp. 53 ff.

³ Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-84.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 221-28.

⁵ See Wiedermann, *Die Religion der alten Aegypter*, p. 112.

⁶ Cf. Mark 14:58. Baudissin (*op. cit.*, p. 409) notes that the conception of the three days and three nights that Jonah spent in the belly of the fish may have originated from the same cult motif of a resurrecting deity. The belly of the fish is here a substitute for the underworld.

⁷ Hos. 6:1, 2.

⁸ Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 283; see Ezek. 37:1-10.

to the dead,¹ and קוֹם is used to signify resurrection of the dead.² Further, the usual interpretation of בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי cannot be accepted, for the text must be radically changed to make it conform to the idiom signifying "a few days."³ No change in text is needed if the expression is interpreted as referring to the resurrection on the third day, after two days.

We have already referred to Hosea's description of the return of the deity with the fertilizing rains,⁴ the resurrection of the dead Ephraim from Sheol,⁵ and the dependence of the people on the "return" of Yahweh rather than Baal.⁶ When the symbolism was that of a departing rather than a dying god, the return took the place of the resurrection.⁷

THE DIVINE MARRIAGE

The return of the god was followed by his marriage to the goddess, and much of the symbolism of Hosea and other prophets is to be understood from this viewpoint.⁸ This divine union was the most prominent aspect of the cult ritual. It is frequently found entirely apart from the motif of the dying god.⁹ This is especially true of the Sumerian cult.¹⁰ For the greater part, however, the two conceptions in

¹ I Sam. 2:6; Deut. 32:39; cf. Isa. 26:14, 19; Ezek. 37:6, 10. For a discussion of the use of קוֹם in relation to the deity see Baudissin, *op. cit.*, pp. 450-510.

² Isa. 14:9; 26:14, 19; Ps. 68:2 (used of the deity); 88:11; Job 14:12, etc. Cf. Syr. ܩܡܐ, "resurrection."

³ Cf. II Kings 9:32; Amos 4:8. W. R. Smith (*The Prophets of Israel*, p. 188) says of Hos. 6:2, "But to Hosea the repentance of the nation is as a resurrection from the dead."

⁴ Hos. 6:3; 10:12.

⁵ Hos. 13:14. For a similar discussion of this verse see Baudissin, *op. cit.*, pp. 406, 407.

⁶ Hos. 11:7.

⁷ See Cant. 2:8 ff.

⁸ "The representation of a god as the husband of his land was close at hand in the Baalism of the day, in which this was the basic thought," writes J. M. P. Smith in *The Prophet and His Problems*, p. 115.

⁹ See Ezek. 16:1 ff.; Gen. 6:1-4; Ps. 45. The latter is a song celebrating the marriage of the king as god (see J. M. P. Smith, "Traces of Emperor Worship in the Old Testament," *AJSL*, XXXIX, 37).

¹⁰ The early Sumerians may not have worshiped the dying god, for this motif does not appear in the early royal inscriptions. Tammuz and Ininni are not closely associated with each other before the Agade supremacy. Baudissin (*op. cit.*, pp. 356-60) suggests that Tammuz was not originally a resurrecting springtime deity. The month does not seem to have been named after him until Sargonic times. The motif of the dying god in the Near East may have originated with the Hurrians, who apparently preceded the Sumerians, Semites, and Indo-Europeans, and who may be responsible for many of the common elements in the near-eastern religious culture (see E. A. Speiser, *Mesopotamian Origins*, pp. 164-78). The marriage of the god and goddess might be called the "typical" motif of the popular Sumerian religion. For an example of this see Gudea's Inscription, Cylinder B (see I. M. Price, *The Great Cylinder Inscriptions of Gudea*, pp. 39 ff.).

Hebrew thought are combined. The marriage of the god and goddess was dramatized by the sacred prostitutes.

The god, goddess, and offspring were the center of the cult, forming a sort of trinity. These trinities appear throughout the Near East.¹ In Cantic there seems to be a trinity of mother, daughter, and lover.² The divine marriage rites made some sort of trinity inevitable, for the offspring of the human representatives of the divine pair was regarded as a child of the gods.³ Sons of the god are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. The Judeans, in a metaphor obviously drawn from fertility-cult practices, are represented by Ezekiel as the product of the marriage between Yahweh and the virgin Jerusalem.⁴ The sons of the *zonah* in Hos. 2:4 are obviously hers by her first husband, Yahweh.⁵

¹ Many, although not all, of the liturgies refer to the offspring of the divine union. A New Year liturgy of the Sumerians represents the marriage of Enki and Nintu and the consequent birth of Takku (Tagdug) (see M. Jastrow, "Sumerian Myths of Beginnings," *AJSL*, XXXIII, 128-30; Langdon, *Epic of Paradise*, pp. 66 ff.). In the liturgy of the death and resurrection of Bel-Marduk, Marduk, Beltis, and Nebo appear as the chief personages (see Langdon, *Epic of Creation*, pp. 35-37). The Hittite trinity is known to us from the rock reliefs of Boghaz Keui (see Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 6). The Egyptian trinity of Osiris, Isis, and Horus is familiar. See H. W. Cartwright, "Iconography of Certain Egyptian Divinities," *AJSL*, XLV, 183-84. The name Tammuz means "son" (Sumerian *damu*), and he is variously conceived as brother, husband, and son of Ishtar. Originally he may have represented the inundating waters which came as a result of the marriage of the god and goddess. His name, "Damu-zl-abzu," may indicate this. Cf. the rôle of Takku.

² Cant. 3:4; 8:2. The youth is also represented as a son born with the New Year beneath the sacred apple tree (Cant. 8:5).

³ The kings and their queens often acted in the rôle of the god and goddess in the New Year ritual. The identification of the king with Osiris had its origin here (see A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 2-10). Ishme-Dagan was apparently the offspring of the New Year marriage, for he calls himself "first-born son of the holy goddess" (see Langdon, *Sumerian Liturgical Texts*, II, 141). Gudea likewise boasts that he is "Gudea, begotten in an eminent sanctuary of Gatumdug" (see Price, *op. cit.*, p. 21). Dungi, who was worshiped as a divine king, spoke of himself as the son of the goddess Ninlil (see Barton, *Sumerian Religious Texts*, I, 29).

⁴ Ezek. 16:20.

⁵ If this is recognized, the motivation for the interpolation of vs. 6 is clear. The interpolator objected to the crudity of the conception which made the offspring the sons of Yahweh, and he wished to identify the sons with those of Gomor in Hos. 1:2 ff. Chapter 2, however, does not condemn the sons, but rather the mother. The sons are worthy to plead with the mother. Harper omits 2:6 on other grounds. It is logically awkward, and the introductory כִּי presages a gloss (see Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 228).

The בָּנִים זָרִים of Hos. 5:7 may also be offspring of the sacred prostitute in the marriage rites, and the expression may be somewhat analogous to the phrase בְּנֵי זְנוּנִים of Hos. 1:2. The root זָנַךְ is frequently used to describe a *zonah* (Prov. 2:16; 5:3, 20; 7:5; 20:14, etc.). זָנַךְ signifies a deity other than Yahweh (Deut. 32:16; Isa. 43:12; Jer. 2:25, etc.). The point is that these are not the children of Yahweh, but rather, as J. M. P. Smith translates, "illegitimate sons" (*The Old Testament: An American Translation*). For a discussion of the sons of the gods see Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 10 ff.

In the Hebrew cult the offspring of the New Year marriage rites were given names symbolic of their status or of the significance of the ritual. The name of Samuel may indicate his divinity, for it certainly is not explained by the popular etymology ascribed to it.¹ That Hannah and perhaps Elkanah took part in the divine marriage rites seems probable from the description of the shrine practices² and the LXX preservation of the text of I Sam. 1:18.³ The names of the children of Isaiah seem to have been formed after this analogy of giving symbolic names to the offspring of the cult rites. The second child was borne to him by a prophetess, and there is no hint that she was his wife.⁴

¹ I Sam. 1:20. The name is to be interpreted "His-Name-Is-God" (see Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-72). The "angels" who visited Abraham's tent may have been members of a band of wandering prophets who acted as קדושים (Gen. 18:1 ff.), and Isaac may have received his name as a result of this fertility-cult origin. For the sexual significance of his name note the use of the root צחק in Gen. 26:8. In the same classification of religious conventions the visit of the "angel" to Manoa's wife, the *yoshevet*, is to be placed (Judg. 13:9; see W. C. Graham, *AJS*, XLVII, 241).

Graham suggests that הָעֵלְמִיָּה of Isa. 7:10 ff. is the mother-goddess, the earth, whose offspring, Immanuel or "God-Is-with-Us," bears a name symbolic of the renewed presence of the god at the springtime.

² I Sam. 2:22.

³ LXX: Καὶ ἐλθὼν εἰς το κατὰλμα αὐτῆς, καὶ ἔφαγε μετὰ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς καὶ ἔπινε. Cf. Cant. 2:3-6.

⁴ No satisfactory explanation of the nature of these two children has been given. שָׂאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל raises a host of unanswerable questions, for Isaiah does not otherwise mention the doctrine of the remnant, and this is singular if he thought it important enough to serve as the name of his son. The Vulgate and LXX read passive participle forms for שָׂאֵר, not regarding it as a part of the proper name and not interpreting it as a concept of the remnant: LXX, ὁ καταλειφθεὶς Ἰασοῦβ; Vulgate, qui derelictus est Jasub. They do have the consonants שָׂאֵר. The attempt of Duhm, Gray, Mitchell, and others to translate the name "A-Remnant-Will-Repent" is, as J. M. P. Smith has shown (*ZAW*, XXXIV, 222), unsatisfactory. Dr. Smith changes the text to read שָׂאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל (*ibid.*, p. 223). Cheyne's אִשְׁרָאֵל is another possible reading. I have no definite suggestion beyond noting the possibility that the child may have been named after the analogy of the fertility-cult offspring, according to which יִשְׂרָאֵל would be suggestive of the returning fertility-god. For this reason Cheyne's suggestion is appealing. That Isaiah would not hesitate to have such a son and to name him after this fashion is made probable not only by his analogy of the expected offspring עֲבִירָאֵל, but also by the fact that he himself apparently resorted to the shrine to have relationships with one of the female attendants, giving the offspring a symbolic name (8:1-4). There is no reason for supposing that הַנְּבִיאָה is a title of courtesy for the wife of the prophet, for it is used exclusively to designate a professional prophetess (Exod. 15:20; Judg. 4:4; II Kings 22:14; II Chron. 34:22; Neh. 6:14). The argument of Gray that הַנְּבִיאָה signifies the wife of the prophet, even as מַלְכָּה signifies the wife of the king, is weak, for the latter signifies something more than wife of the king, carrying also a "professional" connotation (see Gray, "Isaiah," *ICC*, p. 144). Skinner ("Isaiah," *Cambridge Bible*, p. 66) notes the German expression *die frau Propheten*, but this is without analogy in Hebrew. Taking the text at face value, there is no hint that the prophetess was Isaiah's wife or that he married her. The incident recalls Hos. 3:1 ff., according to which the prophet bought the privilege of exclusive attention to the sacred prostitute. It may be that Isaiah's contract was for the purpose of assuring the name of the expected offspring and providing for its sustenance. As in the case of Samuel, the child would perhaps be left

Hosea adapts this custom to his own purposes. With the exception of the name of his first child, the names of the children of Hosea are such as to indicate that the usual *דור* relationship between Yahweh and Israel no longer exists. Nothing could be more adequate as the name of the offspring of the *zonah*, the sacred prostitute of the fertility cult, than *יִזְעָאֵל*.¹ *יִזְעָאֵל* might as well serve as the name of the offspring of the divine pair, here preceded by a negative to indicate the severance of the usual relationships between the god and his people.² *עַמִּי* has much the same connotation. It is significant that when the interpolator of Hos. 2:1 desired to express the antithesis of *עַמִּי*, he wrote *בְּנֵי-אֱלֹהִים*.³ *עַם* has a dual significance, meaning not only "people" but also "lover," with a definite cult connotation, being employed by the maiden of Canticles as a designation of the youth.⁴

The symbolism comparable to that of the Madonna with the infant Jesus appears frequently in the fertility-cult concepts.⁵ Two examples of this occur in Hosea, in both of which the symbolism is adapted to Yahwism. Yahweh is represented as teaching his son Ephraim to walk and carrying him in his arms.⁶ Another reference may be translated:

at the shrine. The situation may be somewhat analogous to that represented in the contract tablets of the neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, according to which the female *Shirkutu*, who were dedicated to Ishtar, were hired out by the shrine. It is not certain that they were prostitutes. Their children belonged to the shrine (see R. P. Daugherty, *The Shirkutu of Babylonian Deities*, pp. 38, 39, 50, 51).

¹ "God-sows" (Hos. 1:4).

² This root is used exclusively of relationships between God and men. Cf. Arab. رَحِمَ, "love," and رَحِمَ, "womb" (رَحِم).

³ Hos. 1:9; cf. 2:1, "Sons-of-the-Living-God."

⁴ Cant. 6:12: *לֹא יָדַעְתִּי נֶפֶשׁ שְׂמַחַתִּי מִרְכַּבּוֹת עַמִּי נָדִיב*; cf. Isa. 32:13. Meek notes that *עַמִּי* is a term of address of a nature deity of the Kataban Arabs (Schoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 56, 57). Baudissin notes a South Arabic proper name *עַמְצֻדָק*, which is to be compared with the old Canaanite proper name *אֲדֹנִי-צֻדָק* (Josh. 10:1) (see Baudissin, *op. cit.*, p. 248). In this connection the name *עַמְיָאֵל* is significant (Num. 34:20; II Sam. 9:4, 5; 17:27, etc.). The same divine title, *עַמִּי*, appears in the proper names *עַמְיָהוּדָי*, *עַמְיָהוּבָר*, *עַמְיָהוּבָר*, and *עַמְיָהוּבָר* (see II Sam. 13:37; I Chron. 27:6; Exod. 6:23; Num. 1:12, etc.).

⁵ A profusion of such images is found throughout the Near East. The most prominent are those of Isis and Horus, the prototype of the Mary and Jesus Madonna representations (see Cartwright, *op. cit.*, p. 183). An image of the mother-goddess with suckling child was found at Ashur (see O. Reuther, *Die Innenstadt von Babylon*, p. 29). A description of the Sumerian goddess Ninkhursag reads:

"Her left breast is open; in her left [hand] she carries a child sucking her left [breast]; with the right she blesses" (Poebel, *Historical Texts* [University Museum], p. 33).

⁶ Hos. 11:3. The text here is obviously corrupt, but the reconstruction of the versions is as obviously correct. The Vulgate very significantly reads: "Et ego quasi nutrijus Ephraim portabam eos in brachiis meis."

"And I was to them as they who lift a babe upon their bosom. I inclined to them and caused [them] to eat."¹ Two other Old Testament passages contain the same conception. Cant. 8:1 presents the cult imagery of the mother with suckling child, and in Num. 11:12 we read: "Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth a suckling child."²

The *zonah* was a distinctly religious prostitute, sanctioned by the religious conventions of the day, and she apparently personified the goddess in the cult rites. Not only did the king and queen participate in these rites as god and goddess, but the sacred harlots assumed the same rôle.³ The consort of the female sacred prostitute was known as her lover, and the term **נִאֲהָב** was a technical designation of the sacred male prostitute.⁴ Hosea distinguishes the lovers from Yahweh himself by the fact that Yahweh was the first husband of the *zonah*.⁵ That they represent the fertility-god is further shown when the *zonah* is described as unaware that her products come from Yahweh, thinking that her lovers gave them to her.⁶ The term **נִאֲהָבִי** may have become a technical designation of the deity, comparable to **אֲדֹנִי**, for in connection with the cult there was a **בֵּית נִאֲהָבִי**, described by Zechariah as the place where the ritual lacerations took place.⁷

¹ Hos. 11:4b. Read **עָלָל** for the impossible **עַל עַל** of the MT. The LXX omits **עָלָל**. **סֹאנֶסֶד לִחְסֵי, סֹאנֶסֶד לִחְסֵי** is to be read for **לִחְסֵי**. For the latter part see the Syr. **סֹאנֶסֶד לִחְסֵי**. This reconstruction follows closely that suggested by Scott (*op. cit.*, pp. 144, 145). Paul Haupt achieves a similar picture, reading **וְאֵהִיָּה לָהֶם כְּמִרְמֵי עֲלָלִים בְּחִבְלֵימָם הָיָה**. "I was to them as those who hold up children with strings under their armpits" ("Assyr. *Atmu*, Fledgling, in the Old Testament," *JBLit.*, XXXIV, 81).

² The difficulty of interpreting the masculine Yahwism in terms of the feminine-cult symbolism appears here in an almost ludicrous aspect.

³ Ps. 45 represents the marriage of the king as god. David may have received his name from participation in the divine marriage rites as Dod. A similar origin may be assumed for Solomon's name, **יְדִידָה** (II Sam. 12:25). A similar significance may be attached to **יְדִידָה**, the name of Josiah's mother (II Kings 22:1). Cf. the phrase **שִׁיר יְדִידָה** in the title of Ps. 45. The annual marriages of the king as God may have been one of the causes of the large harems of the kings. For a discussion of David as Dod see Godbey, *op. cit.*, p. 253. See Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 16 ff., for a discussion of divine Hebrew kings; also J. M. P. Smith, *AJSL*, XXXIX, 37. The concept of the divinity of kings was well known to the Phoenicians and Canaanites of the Tell-el-Amarna period. *Rib-Addi* of Gebal professes to fall at the feet of the king of Egypt, whom he calls "the king, my lord, my god, my sun" (*a-na šipi šarri bili-ia ili-ia šamši-ia*, etc.). This is the common formula (see H. Winckler, *The Tell-el-Amarna Letters*, Nos. 47, 48, 49, 64, 79, 128, 147, etc.). A native ruler, *Mil-ki-li* ("The-King-Is-God"?), is to be noted in this connection. Contrast this with *Ilu-milki*, a messenger of A-bi-milki (*ibid.*, Nos. 151, 163).

⁴ Hos. 2:7 ff.; Ezra 16:37 ff.; 23:9 ff.

⁵ Hos. 2:9, **אִישִׁי הָרֵאשׁוֹן**.

⁶ Hos. 2:10; cf. Hos. 2:14; Ezek. 16:19; Cant. 2:13.

⁷ Zech. 13:6. The first-person suffix seems to become an integral part of deity names (cf. **אֲדֹנִי**, **דֹרְרִי**, etc.).

There are at least three names for the sacred male prostitute: קדש,¹ כלב,² and זונה.³ Apparently any male devotee had access to the sacred women, who, in turn, could solicit whom they pleased.⁴ There were doubtless those who made a profession of prostitution, as well as those who resorted to prostitution as an occasional act of worship. The bands of prophets in early Israel may have been professional sacred prostitutes,⁵ and a similar function may have been performed by the priests.⁶ Hosea describes the twofold function of the priests as the eating of the common meal and intercourse with the *zonoth* and *qedeshoth*.⁷

The pregnancy of the *zonah* was doubtless taken as a sign of the favor of the gods.⁸ The prostitutes went to the shrine seeking "seed of the gods."⁹ As Dr. Graham suggests, the offspring of the sacred prostitutes were the object of much consideration in Hebrew society.¹⁰

¹ Deut. 23:18; I Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:47; II Kings 23:7; Job 35:14.

² Deut. 23:19. כלבים are mentioned in the Phoenician inscriptions from Cyprus from the fourth century B.C. in association with the זלמית (see Cooke, *Text Book of North Semitic Inscriptions*, pp. 65-68).

³ The antiquity of the use of the term זונה in near-eastern cults is evidenced in its occurrence in the Sinaitic-Se'irite inscriptions in the expression זונהבבעלת, sometimes written מהבבעלת (M. Sprengling, *The Alphabet: Its Rise and Development from the Sinai Inscriptions*, "Oriental Institute Communications," No. XII, pp. 27, 32, 35, 37, 38, 42). Here it does not, of course, necessarily refer to sacred prostitutes.

W. C. Graham suggests that the non-sacred prostitutes were called סוֹרְרִים, and refers to Ps. 68:7 and Hos. 4:16.

⁴ See Ezek. 16:30 ff.; Jer. 3:6; Prov. 7:6 ff.; cf. Num. 25:1 ff.; Isa. 57:3 ff.

קדשה, זונה, רשבת, and זלמה were a few of the designations for the female prostitute. The identification of the last two is due to Dr. Graham. The Assyrians had many terms to designate the sacred women: *entu*, *zikru*, *kadishtu*, *harimtu*, etc. (see Woolley, *The Sumerians*, pp. 106-8; B. A. Brooks, "Some Observations Concerning Ancient Mesopotamian Women," *AJSL*, XXXIX, 187 ff.; D. D. Luckenbill, "The Temple Women of the Code of Hammurabi," *AJSL*, XXXIV, 1 ff.). The *zonah* and the *qedeshah* are frequently found paralleled in the Old Testament, and the same person is sometimes represented as both (see Gen. 38:22, 24; Hos. 4:14).

⁵ The prophets are represented by Hosea as acting like the priests, and the general picture recalls the modern dervish (see Hos. 4:5; cf. 9:7).

⁶ Cf. the activities of the sons of Eli (I Sam. 2:22).

⁷ Hos. 4:10, 14.

⁸ This is the obvious interpretation of Hos. 4:10. Harper objects on the ground that offspring were not desired, but there is no hint to that effect. The offspring played a prominent rôle in many of the cult liturgies. Fertility-cult prostitution was not considered so much a prostitution as a temporary marriage, the purpose of which was conception. The prominence of the rôle of the offspring is indicated in Hosea, chaps. 1 and 2; Ezek. 16:20; I Sam. 1:19, etc. See Jastrow, *AJSL*, XXXIII, 128-30, for the offspring in the Sumerian liturgies.

⁹ Mal. 2:15.

¹⁰ Recent studies have led Dr. Graham to the conclusion, evidence for which will in due course be published, that the fatherless and the widows in whom Deuteronomy shows such interest are cult people, whose life was integrated in the sanctuary, and who were to be dislocated by Josiah's reform.

Apparently the *zonah* might be married, unmarried, or a widow. Hosea refers to married *zonoth*.¹ It may be that the married *zonoth* were somewhat less respected than those who were unmarried, for they are most strongly condemned in Hosea, Ezekiel, and Proverbs,² and their activities are characterized as adultery by Hosea.³ Among the *populus*, however, it is doubtful if any stigma was attached even to the married *zonah*, for these objections come chiefly from the prophetic circles. Hannah, Manoah's wife, and the woman at whose house Elisha stayed were married and functioned as sacred prostitutes, but they are not condemned.⁴

There was a class of professional sacred female prostitutes who made their livelihood through their shrine activities. Such are those described by Ezekiel.⁵ The *zonah* of Hos. 2:4 ff. depended entirely on her lovers to provide her with the necessities of life.⁶ The *zonah* was "kept" by her consort.⁷

¹ Hos. 4:14. The *zonah* of chap. 2 is also represented as a married woman, being the wife of Yahweh.

² Hos. 2:4; 4:14; Ezek. 16:1 ff.; 23:1 ff.; Prov. 7:19.

³ Hos. 2:4; 4:14.

Lucian's description of the sacred prostitutes of Syria does not exclude married women (Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 26). The *qadishtu* of the Babylonian cult apparently practiced her profession after marriage, although the *harimtu* did not (Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 194). Widows may have supported themselves by this means (cf. Gen. 38:1 ff.). Among the Chaouia, who preserve today some of the customs of the fertility cults of the ancient Semitic world, only widows and divorced women may function as prostitutes (see M. Gaudry, *La Femme chaouia de l'aures*, pp. 121, 122). A quotation from Woolley (*op. cit.*, p. 106) will assist in comprehending the function of these women in ancient society: "Attached to every shrine there was a body of women who formed part of the god's household, since by the anthropomorphic beliefs of the time he was credited with human needs, and his temple and its servants were but a replica of the palace and the following of an earthly king. The chief of these women was the bride of the deity. The rest were his concubines and his domestics. . . . There were various grades of temple women, but all were prostitutes."

⁴ The woman in the Elisha incident was acting as a *yoshevet* (see Graham, *AJSL*, XLVII, 214).

⁵ Ezek. 16:1 ff.; 23:1 ff.

⁶ Hos. 2:7, 10, 14; cf. 9:1. A study of the root אהב confirms the opinion that Hosea drew his vocabulary and symbolism from the cult rather than from secular married life. The root appears seventeen times in Canticles and nineteen times in Hosea, whereas the more "nomadic" Amos employs it but once (4:5; it also occurs in the gloss 5:15). Baal is designated as a "loved one" according to Hos. 9:10, where we are to read אהבם, pass. part., with the LXX and most commentators. The *zonah* is characterized as "beloved of a consort" (Hos. 3:1, אהבת רע, אהבת רע). In a cult metaphor Jeremiah describes the relationship between Jerusalem and Jeremiah as "bridal love," אהבת כלולתך (Jer. 2:2; cf. II Sam. 13:15; Ezek. 16:1 ff.). When the post-Exilic interpolator of Hos. 2:16 ff. would designate a similar relationship, he takes his symbolism from the secular realm, employing the figure of the betrothal (Hos. 2:21, ארשתך, ארשתך).

⁷ Hos. 4:10, 11. Read זנרת with the preceding with the LXX version, and change the present dubious pointing to זנרת.

The center of her activities could be almost everywhere, for the shrines dotted the landscape—on the mountain tops,¹ beneath the sacred trees,² on the threshing floor,³ or at the vineyard.⁴ From non-Hosean sources we learn that she plied her trade in the streets,⁵ by the roadside,⁶ and in the city wall.⁷

THE "ETHNAN"

The *zonah* received a reward for her services which was technically designated אֶתְנָן⁸ or אֶתְנָה.⁹ We learn of two types of corruption in connection with the *ethnan*. Ezekiel chides the *zonah* because she has succumbed to the sensuous aspects of the cult to the extent that she gives *ethnan* as bribes to secure consorts that she may carry on her licentious practices.¹⁰ Hosea lifts a warning finger against the devotees of the cult because they lay more emphasis on the lucrative *ethnan* than on real devotion to the deity.¹¹ In the former instance the situation described may represent the poetic license of the prophet who would fit the details of his metaphor to the political situation.

That the function of the *zonah* was the dramatization of the divine marriage is shown by the fact that the *ethnan* was a bride-price. An interesting parallel appears in the Sumerian rites. When Gudea celebrated the New Year marriage of Ningirsu and Bau, he made up the bride-price.¹² A study of the etymology of *ethnan* further reveals it to

¹ Hos. 4:13; cf. Isa. 57:7; Jer. 3:6.

² Hos. 4:13; cf. Jer. 3:6, etc.

³ Hos. 9:1; cf. Ruth 3:2. Ruth was functioning as a *zonah* at the threshing floor (note Ruth 3:7, 8, 13, 14). Boaz presented her with the customary *ethnan* of grain (3:15). רִית is a shortened form of רֵעִית, and it occurs in Syriac as ܪܝܬܐ. This is to be compared with רֵעִיָּה, "beloved," the designation of the maiden of Canticles. Boaz is a name of a deity (cf. I Kings 7:21). In its original form the story of Ruth may have indicated the divine origin of the royal line of the kings of the United Kingdom, David and Solomon.

For other references to threshing-floor shrines see Gen. 50:10; Judg. 6:37; II Sam. 6:6; 24:16–21; cf. Deut. 16:13; Isa. 21:10.

⁴ Hos. 2:8 has a vineyard setting (see Judg. 21:19 ff.; Isa. 5:1 ff.; Cant. 2:15; 7:12; 8:11, etc.).

⁵ Ezek. 16:30, 31; Prov. 7:8. The Assyrian sacred prostitute was described as "on the street" (Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 194).

⁶ Gen. 38:14.

⁷ Josh. 2:15.

⁸ Hos. 9:1; Deut. 23:19; Ezek. 16:31, 34, 41; Isa. 23:17, 18; Mic. 1:1.

⁹ Hos. 2:14.

¹⁰ Ezek. 16:34.

¹¹ Hos. 9:1.

¹² "On New Year's day, the feast of Bau, the bride-price was made up: 1 fat ox, 1 fat sheep, 3 corn-fed sheep, 6 rams, 2 lambs, 7 rations of dates, 7 jars of butter, 7 palm-tree hearts, 7 fig-tree birds, 7 fig-cakes, 1 wild goose, 7 ducks and drakes, 15 cranes, 60 doves (their cages were fifteen), 60 shekels of suhur fish (their baskets were thirty), 40 talents of cabbage, 7 talents of fire-rushes, 60 talents of *eru*-wood, the marriage gift of Bau in that temple (Gudea) dedicated" (Barton, *Royal Inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad*, pp. 192–95; see Price, *op. cit.*, p. 79). The corn, wine, oil, silver, gold, wool, flax, vine, and fig tree

be a marriage gift. It is comparable to the Assyrian *nudunnu*, *nudnu*, and *nudinnu*, which signify "dowry."¹ This is extremely significant in view of Ezek. 16:33, where the *ethnan* is identified with נָדָן.

The *ethnan* was one of the chief means of support of the shrines, and it was probably in part because of this that the legislation of Deuteronomy which prohibited the presentation of the *ethnan* as an offering was promulgated, thereby removing from the local sanctuaries the most lucrative source of income.² Isaiah informs us that the *ethnan* was not always stored up or hoarded by the *zonah*, but that it was dedicated to Yahweh, being given over to the attendants at the shrine to provide them with abundant food and stately clothing.³ The financial importance of the *ethnan* to the shrine may have been one of the reasons for the exaggerated emphasis upon it in Hosea's time.⁴ Both Herodotus and Lucian are witnesses to the important rôle which the hire of the sacred prostitute played in the temple affairs.⁵

THE CULT MOOD

The fertility cult was a religion of the senses, an aesthetic cult. It was literally a religion of wine, women, and song. The two roots most descriptive of the cult are שִׁבְיָה and גִּיל.⁶ Even the kings and princes

of Hos. 2:10, 11, and 14 are to be compared with this. The bride-price presented by the king would be more pretentious than that of the average male devotee, and may have served as provisions for the common meal in which all the people participated. David's gift to the multitudes of Israel of loaves of bread, *eshparim*, and raisin-cakes after the New Year ark procession may have been of this nature (II Sam. 6:19).

¹ The Assyr. *nadanu* equals the Heb. *nathan*. For the Assyrian usage of *nudunnu*, *nudinnu*, *nudnu* see Harper, *Letters*, No. 336; Strassmaier, *Econ. Doc.*, Nbk., 91, 92, 283. Both these forms and the Hebrew *ethnan*, *ethnah* are written with and without the final doubled *nun*. The form *ethnah* is therefore to be retained as a legitimate alternative reading of *ethnan*, and it is not, as Nowack suggests, a scribal error (see *Die kleinen Propheten*, p. 20).

² Deut. 23:19.

³ Isa. 23:18. Micah informs us that the images and idols of the shrine were gathered from the *ethnan* of the *zonah* (Mic. 1:7).

⁴ Hos. 9:1.

⁵ Lucian writes: "The place of hire is open to none but foreigners, and out of the proceeds of these women a sacrifice is paid" (Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 46).

In describing the construction of the tomb of Alyattes at Sardis by various classes of people, Herodotus writes: "It appeared on measurement that the portion of the courtesans was the largest. The daughters of the common people in Lydia, one and all, pursue this traffic" (I. 93).

There may be another reference to the *ethnan* in Hos. 8:9. The text is corrupt, and the Syriac and LXX versions apparently read אֶתְנָן אֲהָבִים: Syriac, ܐܬܢܢܐ ܐܗܒܝܢ; LXX, δῶρα ἡγάπησεν.

⁶ Hos. 7:3; 9:1; 10:5; Cant. 3:1; Joel 2:23; Mic. 1:10, etc.

took part in the cult orgies.¹ Intoxicating wines assisted the worshiper in the attainment of spiritual elevation and communion with the god-head.² At times the feeling ran so high that only the symbolism of the oven at its hottest could adequately express the fervor of the cult exercises.³ Although usually mentioned second in the great fertility-cult trinity of corn, wine, and oil, yet wine seems to have flowed the most freely during the religious services, and that one part of the shrine should have been called "the house of wine" seems quite fitting.⁴

Eating also played an important rôle in the observance of the rites. It is quite natural that such an agricultural cult should stress the common meal. The people came to the shrines with their flocks and herds, and these were devoured in the great common meal in which the god, priests, and people partook together.⁵ The share of the god was the fat, which was burned on the altar.⁶ Bread was eaten at the shrine, and the thought of the necessity of eating it away from the sanctuary in some distant country would have filled the worshipers' hearts with a dread of the "unclean."⁷ The picture presented by Hosea is not wholly unattractive. The entire life of the people, their threshing floors, and the bread of their mouths were regarded from a religious viewpoint. Before they drank they poured out some of the wine as a libation to their god.⁸ Whenever they ate meat it was a sacrifice: "Offerings of lamb they sacrifice and flesh they eat."⁹ Note the parallelism. In their enthusiasm for their religion they increased the number of their altars with their increasing prosperity.¹⁰

¹ Hos. 7:3, 5; 8:10. In 7:5 read *מחמת היין* with the LXX and Syriac versions. I translate: "On the day of our king [New Year ?] the princes dance [חלל] from the heat of the wine. He [the king] stretches out his hand to scorners when they approach." For חלל in this sense see Judg. 21:1; I Sam. 18:6; Exod. 32:19. The versional renditions of החלל as "begin" offer no help in reconstructing the text. Another possible reading is: "By day the princes profane our king by means of the heat of the wine [so that] he stretches out his hand to scorners when they approach." Cf. with this 8:10, which may be read: "The princes profane the king with [the promise of] a little tribute."

² Hos. 4:11; 7:5.

³ Hos. 7:4, 6.

⁴ Hos. 2:10; Num. 18:12; Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; Jer. 31:12; Joel 1:7; Hag. 1:11; Neh. 5:11; 10:40, etc.; cf. Cant. 2:4.

⁵ Hos. 4:10; 5:6; cf. Deut. 12:5, 7; I Sam. 2:13.

⁶ Cf. Hos. 9:4. Ehrlich's emendation of *יערבו* for *יערבו* is unnecessary (see Jer. 6:20; Mal. 3:4).

⁷ Hos. 9:4. The Syriac version makes *כחמם* the subject of *רבוץ*. ⁸ Hos. 9:4.

⁹ Hos. 8:13. Read with the Syriac and LXX *רבשר*. The *god* of *הבהבי* is due to dittography. Cf. Arab. *هيهب*.

¹⁰ Hos. 10:1. This belief that the condition of the country is dependent on the state of the sanctuary appears in a Sumerian inscription: "The inundation does not arise; high water glistens not as it rises. . . . Gudea lifted up his eyes to his lord Ningirsu. He commanded him to build his temple" (Barton, *Royal Inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad*, p. 205).

The shrines, supported by the almost excessive devotion of the people, were places of great beauty. They prospered through the income of the *zonoth*. Ezekiel represents the sanctuaries as lavish and luxuriant.¹ The priests prospered at the expense of the people.² The picturesqueness of the shrines was enhanced by the colorful attire of the *zonoth*. They made themselves clothes from the wool and flax given to them as *ethnan* by their lovers.³ They wore nose-rings, bracelets, and necklaces as they searched for their lovers.⁴ Jeremiah admits us to the boudoir of the *zonah* as she prepares herself for the religious exercises, bedecking herself with scarlet and ornaments of gold, penciling her eyebrows with stibium, and generally beautifying herself.⁵ Not without reason was she called "My Beautiful One" in the liturgy.⁶ Incense and spices assisted her in her wiles.⁷ She was especially fond of *eshishoth*, which were apparently sacrificial cakes consumed in the common meal at the cult festivals.⁸ She was distinguished as a sacred prostitute by her attire.⁹

¹ Ezek. 16:15 ff.; cf. Cant. 1:16, 17.

² Hos. 4:8; 5:1, 2; 6:9.

³ Hos. 2:11; Ezek. 16:10 ff.

⁴ Hos. 2:15; Exod. 32:2; Ezek. 16:11 ff.; 23:26; Cant. 7:2. She decorated herself with jewels as a bride (Isa. 61:10).

⁵ Jer. 4:30, 41.

⁶ Cant. 2:10, etc.

⁷ Hos. 2:15; Prov. 7:17; Cant. 4:11; 5:5; 6:2; cf. Hos. 4:13; 11:2.

⁸ Hos. 3:1; Cant. 2:5. The latter reference, and the distribution of the *eshishoth* by David according to II Sam. 6:19, has to do with the common meal. Meek identifies these cakes with the sacrificial cakes of Jer. 7:18 and 44:19, which were apparently stamped with an image of the mother-goddess and presented to the queen of heaven. Hosea intimates that they were made from grapes (Hos. 3:1). Hirschfeld associates the *eshishoth* with the *דבלים* on the grounds that both recall the shape of the testicles and would form fitting gifts to a sacred prostitute (Hirschfeld, "The Marriage of Hosea," *JAOS*, XLVIII, 277). The etymology of *eshish* or *eshishah* is dubious. There seems to be no difference in meaning between the masculine and feminine forms. I suggest that there may be some relation to the Assyr. *eshshu*, to renew, and that these are "cakes of renewal [of life]." *Eshishah* is perhaps also to be associated with the Assyr. *eshsheshu*, the nature of which is not entirely clear. It was apparently a type of offering. It is mentioned among a list of objects sent to the sanctuary by the king, and we learn of a silver vessel as a container of the *eshsheshu*-offering. A bird is sent for the *eshsheshu*. Certain festival days seem to have been known as the "day of *eshsheshu*," and occur in the months of Siman and Adar. Note the following inscriptions:

"l-en na-sab-bu kaspu-(KUBABBAR) sha-nu-u a-na esh-she-e-shu ki-nish-tum it-ti-shu-nu lish-ku-nu" (Clay, "Yale Oriental Series," Vol. III, col. 51).

"iššur iššuru a-na esh-she-e-shu sha umi (UD) 20-kan maṭu-u, etc." (Contenau, *Louvre*, IX, 134-35).

See also Thureau-Dangin, *Rit. accad.*, p. 65; Winckler, *History of Sargon*, p. 61, l. 31; Sheil, *Les Prismes de roi d'Assyria*, Prism S, col. II, l. 8. For a recent study of *אשישה* see *בן יהודה* (I, 415).

⁹ Gen. 38:15, 16; Prov. 7:10.

HUMAN SACRIFICE

The realism with which the concepts of the fertility cult were conceived in the minds of the people can be comprehended when it is understood that human sacrifices were an essential part of the rites at the shrine. This is also evidence of the terrible seriousness with which the worshipers took their religion. The virginity of their daughters and the life-blood of their sons were at the disposal of the deity.

Ezekiel twice represents human sacrifices in connection with the fertility-cult rites.¹ Prostitution and the sacrifice of sons and daughters are associated by the Psalmist.² Jeremiah refers to human sacrifices on the high places of Baal.³ Hosea quotes a ritual cry of the cultists as they perform their bloody rites: "Sacrifice men! Let them kiss calves!"⁴

Human sacrifices in the fertility cult are well substantiated from non-Hebrew sources. Frazer suggests that in the early Semitic cult the king of a city often played the rôle of the dying god, suffering death at the hands of his people. This later developed into the custom of burning the god in effigy. An effigy of Melcarth of Tyre was burned yearly.⁵ At the Sed festival in Egypt the king was identified with Osiris, posing as the dead Osiris enwrapped in tight bandages. Frazer suggests that originally the king was actually killed.⁶ Langdon suggests that Tammuz was not originally represented as the divine son who perished beneath the waves, but rather as a human king who was slain. Although it is doubtful if this was true of the Sumerian Damu, Langdon seems to be correct in seeing in a liturgy of the cult at Isin a reminiscence of a prehistoric custom of slaying the king as a god. In this liturgy the kings are spoken of as those that sleep, and they may

¹ Ezek. 16:20-22; 23:37.

² Ps. 106:37-39.

³ Jer. 32:35. Further evidence of human sacrifice in the cult is to be found in Lev. 18:21; Deut. 18:10; II Kings 16:3; 21:6, etc. It may be hinted in Prov. 7:26, 27.

⁴ LXX and Vulgate clearly interpret this as a reference to human sacrifice, reading the first word as an imperative. The Syriac version follows the Hebrew. Harper objects to this interpretation on the grounds that human sacrifice and calf worship were never combined, and human sacrifice did not exist in Israel until the time of Ahaz. Both these reasons are rendered invalid by more modern research.

⁵ Frazer, *op. cit.*, pp. 84 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

have escaped actual sacrifice by some symbolic act.¹ A cylinder from Ur discloses a priest with a knife in his upraised hand about to sacrifice a person, possibly a youth, who has fallen at his feet.² The actual significance of human sacrifice among the Hebrews in the fertility cult cannot be stated, but it is possible that the victim represented the dying god.

THE FESTIVALS

It was at the time of harvest that the fertility rites took place on the threshing floors.³ Hosea mentions the feast of booths, also a harvest festival.⁴ He twice refers to the festival of the new moon, once in connection with the Sabbath, and these were probably the two important festivals of each month.⁵

It was probably at the New Year festival that the people came with their flocks and herds to seek Yahweh.⁶ "The day of our king" may signify the day of the New Year rites, when the king participated in

¹ The liturgy is translated:

"The lord Idin-Dagan sleeps,
And the gardens of themselves restrain [their growth].
The city[?] [weeps?] for Ishme-Dagan who slumbers,
And the gardens of themselves withhold [their fruit].
The city[?] [weeps?] for Libit-Ishtar who sleeps.
The city[?] [weeps?] for Ur-Ninib who sleeps.
The city weeps for Bur-Sin who sleeps.
The sturdy youth is in the land of weeping."

—LANGDON, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, p. 26

² M. de Clercq. *Collection de Clercq; Antiquités assyriennes*, I, 18; see Pl. XVIII. A ram depicted beside the head of the priest may represent a substitute, recalling the incident of the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22:13). In connection with this note the figure of a ram caught in a thicket which was discovered at Ur (see Woolley, *Ur of the Chaldees*, pp. 67, 68). A similar motif appears in the opening monologue in Euripides' play, *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Böhl (*op. cit.*, pp. 83 ff.) adds to our knowledge of human sacrifice in the fertility cult through his cogent interpretation of the significance of graves at Ur discovered by Woolley in which many people had apparently been murdered and buried with a chief female personage (see C. L. Woolley, "The Royal Tombs of Ur of the Chaldees," *Mg*, XIX, 5 ff.). Böhl suggests that these tombs indicate a wedding feast of Nannar with a hierodule or priestess, after which the priestess and her attendants are killed, as a sacrifice to the god to secure fertility from the inundating waters. The sacrifices cannot symbolize the dying god, and there is no evidence that Nannar was thought of as such, so Böhl's explanation is plausible. Cf. the interpretation by Sidney Smith, "Assyrian Notes: A Babylonian Fertility Cult," *JRAS*, 1929, pp. 849-68.

³ Hos. 9:1; cf. Ruth 2:1 ff.

⁴ Hos. 12:10. Nowack, Marti, and others read כִּימִי עוֹלָם after the Targum, but the LXX, Vulgate, and Syriac versions follow the Hebrew text. For a discussion of early festivals see Morgenstern's articles in *AJT*, XXI, 27; *JQR*, VIII, 31; *HUCA*, I, 13.

⁵ Hos. 2:13; 5:7; see I Sam. 20:5; II Kings 4:23; Ezek. 45:17, etc.

⁶ Hos. 10:12.

the ritual dramatizations as a god.¹ Two references to יָרֵךְ leave us in the dark as to whether pilgrimages or dances are meant, but the reference is probably to those festivals in which there were sacred dances.²

This survey of the fertility cult as revealed in Hosea is far from complete, but the author hopes that enough has been said so that, in spite of the inevitable misinterpretations, it is obvious that the popular cult, in rather minute details, is reflected not only in the Book of Hosea, but also throughout the Old Testament. The deity of the people was the dying god, whose resurrection was celebrated in the marriage rites. The popular religion of the Hebrews was a nature cult, in which the natural instincts of men and women found rather full expression. It had many aspects, such as prostitution and human sacrifice, which are repugnant to the modern mind, but which, when seen in their proper perspective, evidence a serious devotion to the ideal which shames our modern sophisticated religious attitudes.

This study reveals a further important fact. The prophets did not merely react against the cult, but they took bodily from it many of their highest ideals and most of their significant symbolism. The doctrine of immortality, certain aspects of the conception of the coming messianic kingdom, the concept of the suffering servant, and the ideal of the fatherhood of God are contributions of the cult. The following quotation from Hōs. 11:1, 3, based on the cult symbolism, represents as developed a religious concept and as deep a mystic insight as appears in sacred literature:

When Israel was a child I loved him,
And from Egypt I called my son:
And it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took him up in my arms.

¹ Hos. 7:5; cf. LXX, *Αἱ ἡμέραι τῶν βασιλέων ἡμῶν*. For this interpretation see E. G. Kraeling, "The Real Religion of Ancient Israel," *JBLit.*, XLVII, 153.

² Hos. 2:13; 9:5; see Judg. 21:19.

